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The Significance of the Lord’s Prayer

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Introduction

Prayer occupied an important place in the life and the teachings of Jesus. He was emphatically a man of prayer, praying frequently in private and in public and occasionally spending whole nights in communion with His heavenly Father. He often spoke to His disciples on the subject of prayer, cautioning them against show-off, or urging perseverance, faith and large expectation, and He gave them a model of devotion in the Lord’s Prayer. The brief prayer is found in both the Gospel of Matthew and Luke, as well as in the Didache. These differing versions, further complicated by varying translations of Greek to English, fuel debate over correct word order, phrase omission, word translation, and inclusion of the doxology. The New Testament records Jesus and his disciples praying on several occasions, but never this specific prayer, so the application and understanding of the prayer during the ministry of Jesus is unknown.² The main initiative this paper seeks to take in hand is the significance of the Lord’s Prayer. This will involve an overview of the Lord’s Prayer, the form, the setting, arrangement, Greek textual variants, sources of the Lord’s Prayer taking into consideration English translation of the Bible and the significance of the Lord’s Prayer.

² Rick W. Byargeon, “Echoes of Wisdom in the Lord’s Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13).” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41, No.3 (1998):362.

I. Background of Lord's Prayer

A. The Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer also called the 'Pater Noster' in Latin or 'Our Father' is a central prayer in Christianity.³ In the New Testament of the Christian Bible, it appears in two forms: in the Gospel of Matthew as part of the discourse on display in the Sermon on the Mount, and in the Gospel of Luke, which records Jesus being approached by "one of his disciples" with a request to teach them "to pray as John taught his disciples." The prayer concludes with "deliver us from evil" in Matthew, and with "lead us not into temptation" in Luke. The liturgical form is Matthean. Some Christians, particularly Protestants, conclude the prayer with a doxology, an addendum appearing in some manuscripts of Matthew.⁴ Below are the two forms of the Lord's Prayer as they appear in the English version of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke:

English Version of the Prayer in Matt. 6:9-13:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."⁵

English Version of the Prayer in Luke 11:2-4

"Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation."⁶

B. Form of the Lord's Prayer

This prayer is given by the evangelists in two different forms and in two entirely different connections. In Matthew's account the prayer is given as a part of the Sermon on the Mount and in connection with a criticism of the pretension usual in the prayers of the hypocrites and

³ Pater Noster and Our Father are the terms used of the Lord's Prayer by the Roman Catholic Church. www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/lord'sprayer.htm/2011/09/25. Note 3. Browsed 22:50pm 2011/10/03.

⁴ M. D. Goulder and Ott by Joel B. Green, "The Gospel of Luke" in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p.455.

⁵ *The NET BIBLE*, ed. W. Hall Harris *et al* (Belarus: Biblical Studies Press, 2005), p. 1817.

⁶ *The NET BIBLE*, p.1963.

the heathen. Luke introduces the prayer after the Galilean ministry and represents it as given in response to a request from one of His disciples, “Lord teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1). It gives us however, no note of time or place and it is quite possible that the incident which it records took place much earlier. The later form is much shorter than that of Matthew and the common parts differ materially in language.⁷

Since we have two accounts of the Lord’s Prayer appearing in both Matthew’s account (Matt. 6: 9-13) and that of Luke (Luke 11:2-4), it will be expedient to first look at the relationship between the accounts. Together with Mark, Matthew and Luke comprise what are called the Synoptic Gospels. These Gospels share prototype narratives with very similar material, although they differ at many points. Luke’s account differs considerably from the account of Matthew which at several points is more elaborate and has slight differences in wording.⁸ The general scholarly consensus is that Mark preceded Matthew and Luke. The latter two evangelists would then have used Mark as a guide in the writing of their own gospels.⁹ However, Matthew and Luke often share material that is not found in Mark.

The Lord’s Prayer is one example of this material found in both Matthew and Luke but not in Mark. In Christian scholarship, the Lord’s Prayer’s absence in the Gospel of Mark together with its occurrence in Matthew and Luke has caused scholars who accept the two-source hypothesis as against other document hypotheses to conclude that it is probably a logion original to ‘Q.’¹⁰ Thus, Scholars the likes of Goulder and Ott suspects that Matthew and Luke were using a common source other than Mark as they wrote. We do not have this other common source, but scholars have named it the ‘Q’ Document a short form for Quelle, the German word for ‘source’. They suppose it to contain all the materials that are shared between Matthew and Luke but are not found in Mark. However, these attempts by these Scholars to explain such hypotheses are

⁷ John Cochrane O’Neill, “The Lord’s Prayer.” *Journal for the Study of New Testament*. No. 51 (1993):5.

⁸ Green, “The Gospel of Luke” in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p.444.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ William Barclay, *The Lord’s Prayer*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), p. 20

unconvincing.¹¹ Nevertheless, Lohmeyer observed that the prayer has existed so far back as we can trace in two forms.¹² Metzger aptly observed that the shorter, divergent text of Luke is the original pericopy of the Lord's Prayer.¹³ Jeremias on his part asserts that the longer form of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew is due to additions to the basic form attested by Luke.¹⁴ While Steeter and Manson disagree that both Luke and Matthew are not dependent on any 'Q' source but that both drew the sections of their Lord's Prayer from a recension of 'Q' used in their church and available to them.¹⁵

The view of Scholars on the form of the Lord's Prayer cannot be exhausted but it is evident that there are vast differences in opinion as to the evangelist's form of their versions of the Lord's Prayer. Scholars the likes of Green posit that it is unlikely that any of the Gospel writers among the evangelists with special reference to Luke and Matthew would have to omit clauses from a prayer taught by Jesus. The prayers should be considered on a broader context as emanating from two distinct churches at that time with each having its distinctive liturgical wordings as taught by Jesus.¹⁶ However for the purpose of this term paper, I wish to affirm alongside Green that the two evangelist were independent writers having each a distinctive liturgical wording of the Lord's Prayer as taught by Jesus.

C. Setting of the Lord's Prayer

The setting for the Lord's Prayer in Matthew is different as compared to that in Luke. In the former, it is found as one piece in a series of Jesus' teachings on the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), while in Luke the disciples come to Jesus and ask him to teach them to pray, much like John the Baptist taught his disciples (Luke 11.1). This notion of a teacher instructing his disciples in how to pray developed in the Rabbinical Jewish tradition in Palestine before the

¹¹ Citing M. D. Goulder and Ott by Green, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p.455.

¹² Citing E. Lohmeyer by Green, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p.455.

¹³ Citing Metzger by Green, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p.455.

¹⁴ Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), p.89.

¹⁵ Citing Streeter and Manson by Green, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p.455.

¹⁶ Joel B. Green, "The Gospel of Luke" in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p.444.

coming of Jesus.¹⁷ In asking Jesus to teach them to pray, the disciples want people to be able to identify them as followers of Jesus, in other words, they want to pray like Jesus. In Luke, Jesus is happy to provide this instruction.

If the prayer was given only on one occasion, there is little doubt that Luke preserves the true historical circumstances, though not necessarily the accurate point of time or place, or the exact form of language. Such a request made at the close of the prayer of Jesus would be natural, and the incident bears every mark of reality. On the other hand, it would be reasonable to assume that the author of Matthew's source, remembering the incident, incorporated the prayer in the Sermon on the Mount as an illustration of the injunctions concerning prayer.¹⁸

There are many reasons for regarding the Sermon as a collection of sayings spoken on different occasions and summarized for convenience in teaching and memorizing. There is, however, no proof that the prayer was given but once by Jesus. We need not suppose that His disciples were always the same, and we know that He gave instruction in prayer on various occasions. He may have given the model prayer on one occasion spontaneously and at another time on the request of a disciple. It is probable that the two evangelists, using the same or different sources, presented the prayer in such connection as best suited the plan of their narratives. In any case, it is rather remarkable that the prayer is not quoted or directly mentioned anywhere else in the New Testament.¹⁹ It worthy to note however, that none of the evangelists made mention precisely of the time or place of setting of the Lord's Prayer, but it is quite possible that the incident which they record took place much earlier or later than we presuppose.

II. Content of the Lord's Prayer

A. Arrangement of the Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer begins with an opening vocative; 'Our Father' or 'Father' as the case may be in respect to Matthew and Luke. The

¹⁷ O'Neill, "The Lord's Prayer." *Journal for the Study of New Testament*. No. 51 (1993):5.

¹⁸ I. Howard Marshall, "The Gospel of Luke" in *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), p.214.

¹⁹ Barclay, *The Lord's Prayer*, p. 21

Lord's Prayer consists of six petitions in Matthew and five petitions in Luke as can be seen from the English version:²⁰ Here below is a comparison of the two:

Initial address: "Our Father in Heaven" in Matthew and "Father" in Luke.

1st petition: "Hallowed be your name." This phrase is same both in Matthew and Luke.

2nd petition: "Your kingdom come" appears in both Matthew and in Luke.

3rd petition: "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" is found only in Matthew and not in Luke.

4th petition: "Give us this day our daily bread." This phrase is same both in Matthew and Luke but with slight variation in each version.

5th petition: "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." This phrase is same both in Matthew and Luke but with slight variation in each version.

6th petition: "And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one." This phrase is same in both Matthew and Luke. But Luke ends only with the first part.

Doxology: "For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen" This is not found in Luke, and in Matthew's Greek MSS representative of the Alexandrian text, but is present in Matthew's manuscripts representative of the Byzantine text

This arrangement can be further divided into three equal parts in regards to Matthew and two ratios three in regards to Luke. The first and second parts are same for the two forms of the Lord's Prayer as found in Matthew and in Luke. The form of the Lord's Prayer in Luke does not contain the third part. In the first part, the thought is directed toward God and His great purposes. In the second part, the attention is directed to our condition and wants. The two sets of petitions are closely related, and a line of progress runs through the whole prayer. The petitions of the first part are inseparable, as each includes the one which follows as the hallowing of God's name requires the coming of

²⁰ www.mrstorage.wordpress.com/2010/03/18 Browsed 2011/10/04 at 04:45 pm.

His kingdom and the doing of his will according Matthew's third petition. Again, the first part calls for the second, for if His kingdom to come; we must have sustenance, forgiveness and thirdly, deliverance from evil. If we seek first the glory of God, the end requires our good. While we hallow His name we are sanctified in Him. The doxology of Matthew is not found in the leading manuscripts and is generally regarded as an ancient liturgical addition.²¹

B. Greek Textual Variants of Lord's Prayer

The most striking variation in the two texts of the Lord's Prayer as it appears in Luke and Matthew is the difference in length. The shorter form of the Lord's Prayer is found in Luke while the more developed form of the Lord's Prayer is found in Matthew.²² The shorter form of Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer is completely contained in that of the more developed version of the Lord's Prayer of Matthew. Luke contains five petitions of the Lord's Prayer while on the other hand Matthew contains six petitions of the Lord's Prayer in its version. Some of the notable variations as they appear in the Greek Text are as follows:

- The invocation in Matthew begins with "Pater hmwn o en toiv ouranoiv" in Greek which implies "Our Father which art in Heaven" which is in accord with the pious and reverent form in Palestine as at the time of Jesus. Luke on the other hand began the invocation with the short form "Pater" which means "Father."²³
- Luke lacks Matthew's third petition about "genhyhtw to yelhma sou, wv en ouravw kai epi ghv" which means "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."²⁴ Although later

²¹ N. T. Wright, *The Lord and His Prayers*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 25.

²² John Nolland, "The Gospel of Matthew" in *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), p.283.

²³ This is attested by majority of Greek Witnesses (MSS): L (Regius 8th century Gospels), W (Washingtonianus early 5th century Gospels), A (Alexandrinus 5th century Most of the NT), Θ (Koridethi 9th century Gospels), D (Bezae/Cantabrigiensis 5th century Gospels and Acts) and Didache among others as Cited by Burton H. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels (A comparison of the Synoptic Gospels)*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1992), p.31.

²⁴ In the Greek Witnesses D (Bezae/Cantabrigiensis 5th century Gospels and Acts) and bo (The Bohairi version) and a few others omit "wv", "as" resulting in "cause your will to be fulfilled in heaven [Footnote continued on next page ...]

Greek Witnesses adds this to the Lucan pericope there by making the prayer begins like that of Mathew.²⁵ This is a scribal tendency to harmonize Gospel Parallels. However, the shorter version of Luke as well as some Church fathers, the likes of Origen, provides more weighty external evidence.²⁶

- Matthew's fourth petition is in agreement close with Luke's form except only for Luke's present imperative for Matthew's aorist and Luke's "to kay'hmeran" meaning "each day" for Matthew's simple "shmeron" meaning "today."²⁷ The difficult word "epiousion" is rendered differently in the versions: Sy(c) has "perpetuum" meaning "perpetual"; Sy(ph) has "necessarium" meaning "necessary"; Sa has "venientem" meaning "future"; mae, bo has "crastinum" meaning "tomorrow's"; vg has "supersubstantialem" meaning "supersubstantial" and in Latin which has "cottidianum" meaning "daily."²⁸ It is however worthy to note that the term "epiousiov" does not occur outside of early Christian literature except in this references; Matthew 6:11, Luke 11:3 and Didache 8:2. This in turns makes the meaning of the word difficult to determine. Louw, nevertheless suggested other possible translation of the term as "the coming day" and "for existence."²⁹
- Matthew's fifth petition is same as that of Luke except for his use of "ta ofeilmata hmwn" for "our debts" while Luke

and on earth." Cited by Donald A. Hanger, "Mathew 1-13" in *Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. David A. Hubbard et al, (Texas: Word Books Publishing, 1993), 33A:145.

²⁵ These later Greek Witnesses among others includes: C (Ephraemi Rescriptus 5th century portion of almost all NT books), Q {(044) Athous Laurae 8th/9th century Gospels/Acts/ General Epistles}, f (Family 13, 11th-15th century Gospels) as cited in *The NET BIBLE*, ed. W. Hall Harris et al (Belarus: Biblical Studies Press, 2005), p.1963.

²⁶ Bodmer papyrus early 3rd century Luke and John), a (Aleph or Sinaiticus 4th century The entire NT), and B (Codex Vaticanus 4th century almost all NT documents) as cited in *The NET BIBLE*, ed. W. Hall Harris et al (Belarus: Biblical Studies Press, 2005), p. 1963.

²⁷ Hanger, "Mathew 1-13" in *Word Biblical Commentary*, 33A:145.

²⁸ Hanger, "Mathew 1-13" in *Word Biblical Commentary*, 33A:145.

²⁹ *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, ed. Johannes P. Louw et al (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), 67:183, 206.

has “tav amartiav hmwn” for “our sins.” However, one of the Greek Witness MSS “D” (Bezae/Cantabrigienesis) has the singular “thn ofeilhn” meaning “debt” or “guilt.” Origen, one of the church fathers on the other hand has “ta paraptwmata” which means “transgressions.”³⁰

- The sixth petition of Matthew has the same form as that of Luke in their usual order of word composition except for Matthew’s aorist usage of the word “forgiven” in Greek “afhkamen” for Luke’s present tense “forgive” in Greek “afiomen.”³¹
- The ending part of the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew “alla rusai hmav apo tou ponhrou” is not found in the version of the Lord’s Prayer in Luke.³² Most Greek Witnesses and the Didache have this ending.³³ But the reading without this sentence is attested by generally better witnesses.³⁴ The phrase was probably composed for the liturgy of the early church. A scribe probably added the phrase at this point in the text for use in public scripture reading. However, it should be noted that both internal and external evidence argue for the shorter reading.³⁵

However, these may not be the only textual variations within the Greek Text in regards to Matthew and Luke on the Lord’s Prayer but these are the ones that stand out.

³⁰ Cited in Hanger, “Mathew 1-13” in *Word Biblical Commentary*, 33A:145.

³¹ *The NET BIBLE*, ed. W. Hall Harris et al (Belarus: Biblical Studies Press, 2005), p. 1817

³² Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels* (A comparison of the Synoptic Gospels), p. 31.

³³ These MSS include; L (Regius 8th century Gospels), W (Washingtonianus early 5th century Gospels), Θ (Koridethi 9th century Gospels), and Didache among others. Cited in *The NET BIBLE*, ed. W. Hall Harris et al (Belarus: Biblical Studies Press, 2005), p. 1817

³⁴ These better witnesses are; a (Aleph or Sinaiticus 4th century The entire NT), B (Codex Vaticanus 4th century almost all NT documents), and D (Bezae/Cantabrigiensis 5th century Gospels and Acts), to mention a few. Cited in *The NET BIBLE*, ed. W. Hall Harris et al (Belarus: Biblical Studies Press, 2005), p. 1817.

³⁵ *The NET BIBLE*, ed. W. Hall Harris et al (Belarus: Biblical Studies Press, 2005), p. 1817.

III. Sources and Translations

A. Sources of the Lord's Prayer

It is evident that the Lord's Prayer shows unmistakable signs of translation from a Semitic original. Black and Jeremias suggest Aramaic and Hebrew.³⁶ The original was probably spoken in Aramaic, while both of the reports are certainly based on Greek sources. The general agreement in language, especially in the use of the unique term "epiousiov" shows that they are not independent translations of the Aramaic original. Kuhn on his part observed the Lord's Prayer has a poetic structure in both Matthew and Luke's forms.³⁷ The sources of the two accounts cannot be known with certainty. It is hardly correct to say that one account is more original than the other.

B. English Translations of the Bible and Lord's Prayer

Besides looking at the textual variants, it is imperative at this point to take cognizance of some issues surrounding the tradition of the Lord's Prayer. Foremost, some English translations in Matthew 6:12 uses the term 'debts', while the older English versions of the Lord's Prayer uses the term 'trespasses.' The ecumenical versions on the other hand often use the term 'sins.' The latter choice may be due to Luke 11:4, which uses the word 'sins', while the former may be due to Matthew 6:12 where Jesus speaks of 'trespasses.'³⁸ As early as the third century, Origen of Alexandria used the word 'trespasses' in Greek 'παραπτώματα' in his translation of the Lord's Prayer.³⁹ The Latin form that was traditionally used in Western Europe has 'debita' which means 'debts,' as opposed to most English-speaking Christians (except Scottish Presbyterians and some others of the Reformed tradition), use of 'trespasses.'⁴⁰ The Established Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Church of Christ, Scientist, as well as the Congregational denomination follow the version found in Matthew 6

³⁶ O'Neill, "The Lord's Prayer." *Journal for the Study of New Testament*. No. 51 (1993):5.

³⁷ Citing Streeter and Manson by Green, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p.455.

³⁸ Barclay, *The Lord's Prayer*, p. 21

³⁹ www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/lord's_prayer.htm/2011/09/25. Note 3. Browsed 22:50pm 2011/10/03.

⁴⁰ O'Neill, "The Lord's Prayer." *Journal for the Study of New Testament*. No. 51 (1993):6

in the Authorized King James Version, which in the prayer uses the words “debts” and “debtors.”⁴¹

Older English translations of the Bible, based on late Byzantine Greek manuscripts, included a concluding phrase “the doxology,” but it is excluded in critical editions of the New Testament. In the King James Version (KJV) of the English Bible, the form of the Lord’s Prayer recited in more liturgically minded churches, has the following phrase as doxology ending: “For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen” while in a slightly different form, by Eastern Orthodox church the phrase appear thus:” For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.”⁴² The New International Version (NIV) and The New International Version (TNIV) both have this phrase in a footnote, and the New American Standard Bible (NASB) has it in brackets while the Revised Version (British and American) such as that of the United Bible Societies, omitted the entire phrase making no mention of it.⁴³ The Catholic Church has never attached it to the Lord’s Prayer, but has included it in the Roman Rite Mass as revised in 1969, in which it is separated from the ‘Our Father’ by a prayer called ‘the embolism’ spoken or sung by the priest.⁴⁴ In 1975 the International commission on English in Liturgy (ICEL) English translation has: “Deliver us, Lord, from every evil, and grant us peace in our day. In your mercy keep us free from sin and protect us from all anxiety as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ” that elaborates on the final petition, “Deliver us from evil.”⁴⁵

The phrase of the doxology is lacking completely in Luke’s form of the Lord’s Prayer. It is found in some Greek MSS of the Matthew’s form of the Lord’s Prayer. When Reformers set out to translate the King James Bible, they assumed that a Greek manuscript they possessed was ancient and therefore adopted the phrase. Later scholarship demonstrated that the manuscript was actually a late

⁴¹ Wright, *The Lord and His Prayers*, p. 67.

⁴² O’Neill, “The Lord’s Prayer.” *Journal for the Study of New Testament*. No. 51 (1993):7

⁴³ www.mrstorage.wordpress.com/2010/03/18 Browsed 2011/10/04 at 04:45 pm.

⁴⁴ www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/lord'sprayer.htm/2011/09/25. Note 3. Browsed 22:50pm 2011/10/03.

⁴⁵ Barclay, *The Lord's Prayer*, p. 21

addition based on Eastern liturgical tradition. The best scholarship has indicated that this phrase is to be considered a later insertion this is because the earliest and best manuscripts of the gospels do not include this phrase.⁴⁶ According to Schurmann, the phrase first appeared in the Didache.⁴⁷ Jeremias observed that:

It would seem that it was inserted at some point to round out the prayer, that is, to help it end on a high note and with the appropriate concluding ratification, 'Amen.' This is in view of the fact that in Palestinian practice it was completely unthinkable that a prayer would end with the word 'temptation.' In Judaism prayers were often concluded with a 'seal', a sentence of praise freely formulated by the man who was praying. This was what the early church did in the earliest period after Jesus' ascension, by concluding the Lord's Prayer with a 'seal.' These changes make the prayer more suited to liturgical recitation. As time goes on and the Lord's Prayer began to be used in Christian services more frequently as a form of common prayer, it became necessary to establish a fixed formulation of the doxology to its present form as we have it today.⁴⁸

While this could and should give us pause as far as our notions about modifying the biblical text is concerned, but it need not be the cause for alarm as the Qaddish and the Eighteen Benedictions which are liturgical prayers recited in Judaism also concludes with a 'seal.' The former beginning in a manner analogous to the Lord's Prayer while the latter constituting the chief prayer of Judaism.⁴⁹ The Church throughout history, under the guidance of the Spirit, thought it a benefit to piety to conclude the prayer in this way, and their authority has been accepted in good faith.

IV. Significance of the Lord's Prayer

The significance of the Lord's Prayer is to be found in and of the wording of the text itself. There is general consensus concerning its division into six petitions, the first part concerning God's honour, kingdom, and will; and the second part concerning the universal needs of humans. This parallels the Ten Commandments, where the first table concerns our duties to God, while the second table concerns the duties we owe our neighbours.⁵⁰ The first three petitions focus on the

⁴⁶ Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, p.106.

⁴⁷ Cited by Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, p.106.

⁴⁸ Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, p.106.

⁴⁹ Green, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p.457.

⁵⁰ www.mrstorage.wordpress.com/2010/03/18 Browsed 2011/10/04 at 04:45 pm.

majesty of God, purpose of God, and acceptance of God’s will. The latter part focuses on our present need, our past sin, and our future welfare. The petitions will be examined separately, along with the initial address and concluding doxology with primary focus being to relate the versions in Matthew 6:9-13 and in Luke 11:2-4 alongside the Didache.

Initial address: “Our Father in Heaven.”

The opening words are ‘Our Father,’ which immediately defines the relationship between God and the person praying. Thus, when we pray, we do address a fatherly God. Martin Luther makes much in his lectures on Galatians that faith in its most essential form is our human act of declaring God to be what God truly is.⁵¹ We also see that God is in heaven, that is, God is profoundly and fundamentally separated from created things as being far above and beyond them, beyond us. This phrase identifies a relationship of undeserved, and unconditional, yet practical love.⁵² Defining the relationship sets the stage for the rest of the prayer, and sets the context from which the six petitions are derived.

1st Petition: “Hallowed be your name.”

This petition is a call to honour the name of God. Though we address a fatherly God, this God is still God, and is worthy of our respect and praise, our anxiety and our love. In recognition of this, the verse continues, we are to declare God to be holy. We are to “hallow” or to “sanctify” God. This is to recognize God’s perfections, God’s above-ness. This is the task of all creation, of the human being in general, and of the Christian in particular. In biblical times, one’s name was more than just what you were called; it defined your very being.⁵³ This first petition echoes the opening of the *Qaddish*, a Jewish doxology usually recited following prayer at synagogue services. The *Qaddish* begins, “Exalted and hallowed be his great name.” However, there is some controversy as to the date of origin of the *Qaddish*, as reference of its use in liturgy didn’t occur until around 600 C.E., well after the Lord’s Prayer was included in the Gospel of

⁵¹ Barclay, *The Lord’s Prayer*, p. 21

⁵² Wright, *The Lord and His Prayers*, p. 87.

⁵³ Hanger, “Mathew 1-13” in *Word Biblical Commentary*, 33A:147.

Matthew. Some scholars still contend the Lord's Prayer does borrow from the *Qaddish*.⁵⁴ However, the name of God stands for the very character and nature of his being. This petition is not meant as a call to honour the name of God, but rather is an acknowledgement that his name is already hallowed.

2nd Petition: “Your kingdom come.”

This petition does not refer to a literal kingdom, but rather to the reign of God. The prophets had declared that the messiah would come, and the Jews would be set free, both in a heavenly kingdom and an earthly one.⁵⁵ At the time Jesus gave these instructions on how to pray, the Jews were living under the oppressive rule of the Romans, who were merely the latest in a long line of nations that had ruled The Promised Land since the fall of Judah to the Babylonians. The Israelites were anxiously awaiting God's deliverance from the Romans, to have their land, equated with God's Kingdom, returned to them.⁵⁶ Along with the appeal for God to bring his kingdom into the physical plane, this petition is also a request for God to exert his power on Earth, through his Word and Spirit, so that “the whole world may willingly submit to him.”⁵⁷ It is also a request for his presence to be among the people of the Earth so that they may clearly discern his will. According to Luther in his Small Catechism, God's kingdom comes on its own without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come to us...⁵⁸ Finally; the phrase “the Kingdom of God” is used more-or-less interchangeably in the New Testament with “the reign of God”. This suggests the petition is asking for a state of soul in which God reigns. On the contrary, the statements could easily be eschatological in nature; the petitioner is asking for the swift arrival of The Day of the Lord, a collective state of being in which all of Creation is completely under the control of God.

As with the first petition, this phrase parallels a line in the *Qaddish*, “May he establish his kingdom in your life-time.” Due to

⁵⁴ www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/lord'sprayer.htm/2011/09/25. Note 3. Browsed 22:50pm 2011/10/03.

⁵⁵ Barclay, *The Lord's Prayer*, p. 21

⁵⁶ Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, p.106.

⁵⁷ www.mrstorage.wordpress.com/2010/03/18 Browsed 2011/10/04 at 04:45 pm.

⁵⁸ Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism of Martin Luther*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p.78

these parallels, David de Sola Pool argues that, “there is an exact equivalence between the Lord’s Prayer and the *Qaddish* except for the difference of person.”⁵⁹ This has sparked further debate about the date of origin of the *Qaddish*, but there is an undeniable link between the two prayers, regardless of which originated first.⁶⁰

3rd Petition: “Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

This petition identifies the priority of yielding to the will of God, in the same way the angels are always ready to do his will; it is a rejection of our own will, and a submission to his. Just as the petition “Your kingdom come” asks that God’s desires be paramount in our lives, this petition is a request to live in growing obedience to those desires. As Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done” (Mark 14:36). The phrase “On Earth as it is in Heaven” is often overlooked, but it is in fact the central phrase tying the two halves of the prayer together. “Your will be done, on earth as in heaven” for Luther, God’s good and gracious will comes about without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come about in and among us. Luther here makes a fine distinction, noting that God’s kingdom is come already and God’s will is done too. He however observed that what we petition for is that we might see it, that we might observe it infuse our lives and the world around us, that we might be made a part of this coming and this doing.⁶¹ This petition is not included in more recent translations of Luke. It is included in the King James Version of Luke, but this translation relied on later manuscripts, while more recent translations used access to older manuscripts, hence its omission.⁶² At this point the prayer turns from heavenly talk of God’s name, God’s kingdom, and God’s will, to talk of earthly things: daily bread, forgiveness, and deliverance. It is the very axis upon which the prayer turns.

⁵⁹ www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/lord'sprayer.htm/2011/09/25. Note 3. Browsed 22:50pm 2011/10/03.

⁶⁰ www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/lord'sprayer.htm/2011/09/25. Note 3. Browsed 22:50pm 2011/10/03.

⁶¹ Luther, *The Large Catechism of Martin Luther*, p.79.

⁶² Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p.306.

4th Petition: “Give us this day our daily bread.”

As we take up the fourth petition we take up the petitions that deal with the human life in human society. Even though Jesus instructs people to focus on the glory of God, using the first three petitions, the final three petitions demonstrate that human needs are also important. Though Deut. 8:3 states, “one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord,” yet one cannot live without bread.⁶³ At the time of these instructions, bread was a staple eaten with every meal, making this petition more than a request for mere bread. It is a plea for sustenance, and what is required to sustain the physical body. However, it does not refer simply to that which is essential to our survival, but it refers to all the good gifts of God’s creation.⁶⁴ Luther goes so far as to include spouses, children, civil society, and money.⁶⁵ Calvin on the other hand, makes the observation that some people are well established in this life and do not question whether the necessities, or even the bounties of life will be available to them. For such people Calvin suggests that the purpose of this petition is to remind them that, regardless of how it may look from down here, even we who are affluent receive our bounty from the hand of God.⁶⁶

There is debate over translation of the Greek word “ἐπιούσιος” as it is not found elsewhere in Greek literature, and was quite possibly made up by one of the disciples.⁶⁷ The word is almost a hapax legomenon, occurring only in Luke and Matthew’s versions of the Lord’s Prayer. It was once mistakenly thought to be found also in an Egyptian accounting book.⁶⁸ The meaning of the word normally translated as ‘daily,’ “ἐπιούσιος” is obscure. Etymologically “ἐπιούσιος” seems to be related to the Greek words “ἐπι,” meaning “on,” “over,” “at,” “against” and “ούσια,” meaning ‘substance’ as such it was translated “supersubstantialem” and as “supersubstantial”

⁶³ Hanger, “Mathew 1-13” in *Word Biblical Commentary*, 33A:147.

⁶⁴ www.mrstorage.wordpress.com/2010/03/18 Browsed 2011/10/04 at 04:45 pm.

⁶⁵ Luther, *The Large Catechism of Martin Luther*, p.81.

⁶⁶ John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew Mark, and Luke*, (Grand Rapids: Baker books, 2009), 1:320.

⁶⁷ Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, p.306.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

accordingly.⁶⁹ “επιούσιος” can also be understood as “existence,” i.e., bread that was “fundamental to survival” as in the Syriac Peshitta, where the line is translated “give us the bread of which we have need today.”⁷⁰ However, scholars of linguistics consider this rendering unlikely since it would violate standard rules of word formation. Koine Greek had several far more common terms for the same idea.⁷¹ Some interpret “επιούσιος” as meaning “for tomorrow”, as in the wording used by the Gospel of the Nazaraeans for the prayer.⁷² The common translation as “daily” is conveniently close in meaning to the other possibilities as well. Translated, it loosely means “daily,” though some say a better translation would be “sufficient.” The daily bread illustration is drawn from the story of the Israelites living in the wilderness for 40 years following their exodus from Egypt. As they were wandering in the wilderness, God provided enough for them to eat each day.⁷³ It is a request not for excess, but for the amount needed to get through each day. Those Christians who read the Lord’s Prayer as eschatological, view “επιούσιος” as referring to the second coming reading “for tomorrow” and bread in a metaphorical sense.⁷⁴ Most scholars disagree, particularly since Jesus is portrayed throughout Luke and Matthew as caring for everyday needs for his followers, particularly in the bread-related miracles that are recounted.⁷⁵

5th Petition: “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

After the request for bread, Matthew and Luke diverge slightly. Matthew continues with a request for “debts” to be forgiven in the same manner as people forgive those who have debts against them. Luke, on the other hand, makes a similar request about “sins” being

⁶⁹ *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, ed. Johannes P. Louw et al, 67: 206.

⁷⁰ www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/lord'sprayer.htm/2011/09/25. Note 3. Browsed at 22:50pm 2011/10/03.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, p.306.

⁷³ www.mrstorage.wordpress.com/2010/03/18 Browsed 2011/10/04 at 04:45 pm.

⁷⁴ Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, p.306.

⁷⁵ www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/lord's_prayer.htm/2011/09/25. Notes 22and 23. Browsed at 22:50pm 2011/10/03.

forgiven in the manner of debts being forgiven between people.⁷⁶ Humanity requires more than just physical sustenance to survive in their fallen nature, they require forgiveness. This petition, following on the heels of giving, is about forgiving. As Tertullian said, “It is fitting that after contemplating the liberality of God we should likewise address his clemency.”⁷⁷ This petition consists of two parts, a request for forgiveness, and the forgiveness of others. The first part asks God to forgive all our sins, since the brevity of the prayer precludes an all-inclusive listing. It is an all embracing plea for forgiveness. The second clause addresses our forgiveness of the sins of others. The connection between our forgiveness and forgiving others is laid out in Luke 6:37, “Forgive and you will be forgiven.” Following his instructions in the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus re-emphasizes the importance of this petition in Matthew 6:14-15, stating, “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Calvin sees this petition as that which is materially foundational for all the others, that is to say, he thinks that this petition must be in place before we can pray the other petitions. Another way of saying this is that our justification must be taken care of before we are able to truly praise God and recognize that our daily sustenance comes from God’s hand. He further takes the second phrase not as causal for the first, that is, it is not that we have to forgive those who sinned against us in order to be saved. Rather, he takes it in an exhortative manner, such that it is presented here with such passion and in such close proximity to our own divine forgiveness in order to spur us on to acts of forgiveness. He further iterated that, “This condition is added, that no one may presume to approach God and ask forgiveness, who is not pure and free from all resentment. And yet the forgiveness, which we ask that God would give us, does not depend on the forgiveness which we grant to others.”⁷⁸ Let us not lose sight either of the free nature of our forgiveness, or of this strong exhortation to practice forgiveness in our own relationships.

⁷⁶ William R. Farmer, *The Gospel of Jesus: The Pastoral Relevance of the Synoptic Problem*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), p.49.

⁷⁷ Cited in Barclay, *The Lord’s Prayer*, p. 67.

⁷⁸ Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew Mark, and Luke*, 1:322.

There have been many translations of the word “debts”. The word “debts” “ὀφειλήματα” does not necessarily mean financial obligations, as shown by the use of the verbal form of the same word “ὀφείλετε” in passages such as Romans 13:8.⁷⁹ The original Greek word “ὀφειλήματα” is rarely used in the Bible. It has a wide range of meanings, centred on the common concept of “something owed” or “something due.”⁸⁰ The common use of the term “trespasses” can be attributed to its appearance in The Book of Common Prayer however, a more proper translation is “debts.”⁸¹ Luke 11:4 is translated from the Greek text as, “and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.” The terms “sins” and “indebted” are used in place of “debts” and “debtors” from the version of the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:12. This difference between Luke’s and Matthew’s wording could be explained by the original form of the prayer having been in Aramaic.⁸² As Jesus originally gave this prayer in Aramaic, he might have likely used the word “choba”. Interpreted literally, “choba” would mean “debt,” but it is also the most common rabbinic word for “sin.” The Gospel writers approached this word from different contexts. Matthew, being characteristically Jewish, chose the Greek word for “debts”, “ὀφειλίμα,” because “debt” is the rabbinic word for “sin”. The generally accepted interpretation is thus that the request is for forgiveness of sin, not of supposed loans granted by God. Luke, being characteristically Greek, chose a more general Greek word for sin, “hamartia.”⁸³ However, Anthony C. Deane, Canon of Worcester Cathedral, suggested that the choice of the word “ὀφειλήματα” meaning “debts,” rather than “ἁμαρτίας” meaning “sins,” indicated a reference to failures to use opportunities of doing good illustrated in Jesus’ teaching that the forgiveness of our “sin” or “debt” by God is contingent on how we forgive others in the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:23-35).⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, p.313.

⁸⁰ *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, ed. Johannes P. Louw et al, 67: 221.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Maurice Casey, *The Aramaic Sources of Mark’s Gospel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 4.

⁸³ *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, ed. Johannes P. Louw et al, 67: 221.

⁸⁴ www.mrstorage.wordpress.com/2010/03/18 Browsed 2011/10/04 at 04:45 pm.

6th Petition: “And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.”

Finally, we reach the sixth petition in verse 13. The range of meanings of the Greek word “πειρασμός” which means “temptation,” “testing,” “trial” and “experiment” is responsible for the variation in translations.⁸⁵ Traditionally it has been translated “temptation” and, in spite of the statement in James 1:12-15 that God “tests “or “tempts” nobody, some see this petition in the Lord’s Prayer as implying that God leads people to sin. There are generally two arguments for interpreting the word as meaning here a “test of character.” First, it may be an eschatological appeal against unfavourable Last Judgment, a theory supported by the use of the word “πειρασμός” in this sense in Revelation 3:10.⁸⁶ The other argument is that it acts as a plea against hard “tests” described elsewhere in scripture, such as those of Job. It can also be read as: “Lord, do not let us be led by ourselves, by others, by Satan into temptations”. Since it follows shortly after a plea for daily bread i.e. material sustenance, it can be seen as referring to not being caught up in the material pleasures given.⁸⁷ This petition is often split in two, though Calvin states, “This is wrong: for the nature of the subject makes it manifest, that it is one and the same petition.”⁸⁸ In fact, Augustine would argue that the conjunction holding these two clauses together should be removed entirely.⁸⁹ The common translation of the first clause is a request to “lead us not into temptation.” Biblical examples abound of temptation’s influence on human lives, including Eve, Job, and Christ himself.

Luther insists it is not possible for humanity to avoid temptation as long as we are living in the flesh. He interprets this petition as, “merely a request to God to give us strength and power to persist in the face of great, grievous perils and temptations which every Christian must bear, even if they come one by one.”⁹⁰ Augustine takes

⁸⁵ Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, p.315.

⁸⁶ *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, ed. Johannes P. Louw et al, 67: 224.

⁸⁷ Barclay, *The Lord’s Prayer*, p. 86.

⁸⁸ Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew Mark, and Luke*, 1:335.

⁸⁹ www.mrstorage.wordpress.com/2010/03/18 Browsed 2011/10/04 at 04:45 pm.

⁹⁰ Luther, *The Large Catechism of Martin Luther*, p. 79.

another approach, drawing a distinction between being tempted and being brought into temptation. He asserts that:

“All men must be tempted; but to be brought into temptation is to be brought into the power and the control of temptation; it is to be not only subjected to temptation but to be subdued by temptation.”⁹¹

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” There are two ways to take “evil” here, either a simple noun denoting general evil-ness, or as a substantive referencing a particular evil, “the evil one.” Even though, the devil is never referred to as “the evil one” in any Aramaic sources.⁹² Calvin sees very little difference in how one interprets this word, and I am more than a little inclined to follow him in this opinion. In any case, “evil” is that which is not good, and that which is against good, and therefore that which is against God. Calvin, taking his cue from Saint Augustine, renders the logic of this sentence as follows: “That we may not be led into temptation, deliver us from evil.”⁹³ Thus, the Lord’s Prayer closes with the admittance of our weakness and dependence upon God.

Doxology: “For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen.”

The doxology is not present in Luke, or in the early manuscripts of Matthew representative of the Alexandrian text, but is present in the manuscripts representative of the Byzantine text.⁹⁴ Most Bibles do include it in parenthesis following, or as a footnote to, Matthew 6:13. It is also included at the end of the Lord’s Prayer in the Didache which is the first known use of the doxology, in a less lengthy form “for yours is the power and the glory forever” (Didache 8:2).⁹⁵ At the time of Jesus’ instructions, it would have been unheard of to end a prayer without a doxology, so Jesus likely used some form of doxology.⁹⁶ Because it was so commonly used, the Gospel writers or early scribes may have felt it unnecessary to include explicitly. The

⁹¹ www.mrstorage.wordpress.com/2010/03/18 Browsed 2011/10/04 at 04:45 pm.

⁹² Casey, *The Aramaic Sources of Mark’s Gospel*, p. 6.

⁹³ Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew Mark, and Luke*, 1:335.

⁹⁴ www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/lord's_prayer.htm/2011/09/25. Notes 22 and 23. Browsed at 22:50pm 2011/10/03.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, p.107.

phrase used now is a common way to end Jewish prayer, and some scholars argue it was appended to Matthew at a later date as a conventional doxology to replace what the scribes omitted. The final form accepted is reminiscent of David's doxology from 1 Chronicles 29:11, "Yours, O Lord, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all."⁹⁷

The doxology is a fitting conclusion to the prayer, as it summarizes the previous petitions and brings the focus back to honouring and glorifying God. It recalls the first three petitions; the glorification of God's name, the coming of his reign, and the power of his saving will. The prayer began with praise, and ends with praise, framing it with glory and honour to God.

Conclusion

The significance of the Lord's Prayer lies in the fact that every prayer directed to God should function in two spheres: first focuses on God the Father, and secondly focuses on us. For centuries, the Lord's Prayer has been central to the Christian church, and remains one of the most important prayers in Protestant and Catholic tradition. Despite debate over the use of Jesus' instructions as a framework for prayer, or to be recited verbatim, the importance of this prayer remains. Elements of this prayer, of praise and earthly needs, are important aspects of all prayer, and determining their place in the Lord's Prayer is key to understanding Jesus' instruction. In order to keep this prayer central to the Christian life, a deeper understanding of the contextual basis of these words, and insight into their meaning is important. From the focus on God's honour, kingdom, and will, of the first three petitions, to the focus on humanity's present, past, and future needs of the last three petitions, the Lord's Prayer is an all encompassing prayer that is still significant today.

⁹⁷ Barclay, *The Lord's Prayer*, p. 89.

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